YUKON PROTECTED AREAS STRATEGY

NEW DIRECTIONS

PROCESS : 2001-2003

February 2002

Yukon
Government

102-07302/

NEW DIRECTIONS
(2001 - 2003)

PROCESS:

The purpose of this document is to set out the process by which the Yukon government will implement the Protected Areas Strategy between now and April 30, 2003.

This process reflects the new direction the government set for the Protected Areas Strategy in July 2001. It responds to recommendations on the strategy process made in April 2001 by the Public Advisory Committee, as well as discussions with a range of stakeholders and other governments implementing protected areas programs throughout Canada.

This process also follows from the goals and guiding principles of the Yukon Protected Areas Strategy [YPAS], which have been enshrined in the *Parks and Land Certainty Act*, approved by the Yukon legislature in December 2001.

Essentially the new process implements the main goal of the Protected Areas Strategy – to represent Yukon's ecoregions in ecologically viable areas, capable of maintaining biodiversity.

The process recognizes that only one area of interest will be identified for each of the remaining unrepresented ecoregions and that these identifications will consider and take into account, any contribution of Special Management Areas to Goal I representation. The process also recognizes that three ecoregions that are less than 10% contained in the Yukon will not be represented

The process to establish areas of interest will be primarily driven through scientific and technical analysis of options and the assessment of existing or potential impacts upon other resources and values. At the same time, traditional and local knowledge and community and stakeholder information have their place in the process and will largely come to when a Planning Team is considering Goal I boundaries within the area of interest. However, general or area specific input will be accepted at any time by government, either directly by the YPAS Technical Working Group or through the various departments involved in the YPAS process.

A government Technical Working Group (see Step 1) will conduct value and resource assessments using a set of standard guidelines prepared for the various disciplines by technical/scientific experts within the respective departments. These guidelines represent the industry standards and/or standard practice across the country when conducting assessments. Some of them have been critically reviewed and endorsed by other jurisdictions.

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The following steps have been identified as the process for implementing the Yukon Protected Areas Strategy:

STEP 1: ***Identification of Areas of Interest.***

This step involves the government Technical Working Group, comprised of technical experts in key government departments, and the YPAS Deputy Minister Task Group.

The Technical Working Group is responsible for:

- Identifying initial options based upon natural values (i.e., representativeness, naturalness and ecological viability) and the assessment of other resources and resource values;
- Seeking and incorporating data from First Nations, Renewable Resource Councils, stakeholders or community groups;
- Recommending an area of interest for a particular ecoregion, using a Multiple Accounts Analysis of options;
- Recommending a 'minimum core area' within these recommended boundaries that will represent the minimum requirement to represent that ecoregion based on scientific and technical expertise; and
- Forwarding its recommended option, along with the other options studied, to the YPAS Deputy Minister Task Group.

The YPAS Deputy Minister Task Group is responsible for:

- Reviewing the recommendation from the Technical Working Group and making any adjustments in keeping with the government's overall direction for economic and environmental balance for the protected areas strategy;
- Identifying a list of stakeholders to be contacted on a proposed area of interest;
- Seeking Ministerial approval to proceed with stakeholder discussions on a proposed area of interest; and
- Forwarding a recommended area of interest for a particular ecoregion to Cabinet.

STEP 2: ***Consultation with Affected First Nations & Stakeholders***

The YPAS Management Team, which reports to the YPAS Deputy Minister Task Group, is responsible for:

- Presenting the proposed area of interest to affected First Nations, the Renewable Resource Council, the local municipal government and interested stakeholders both to gauge their response for a subsequent Cabinet Submission and to confer on the proposed area and the process used to identify the proposed area of interest (i.e., assessments etc.).
- At a minimum, affected First Nations, Renewable Resource Councils, municipalities and where established, land use planning commissions will be contacted, along with representatives of industries/businesses and other groups potentially most affected by the proposal.

STEP 3: ***Cabinet Approval of the Area of Interest and Next Steps***

- Cabinet is asked to approve the recommended Area of Interest and to establish the next steps.
- Cabinet has several options with respect to possible next steps:
  - Seek either a map notation or interim withdrawal for the proposed area of interest, with no further immediate actions;
  - Instruct departments to undertake detailed assessment work in anticipation of Goal I planning;
  - Establish a Planning Team based on terms of reference to both identify proposed Goal I boundaries, and conduct public consultation throughout this process.

STEP 4: ***Goal I Area Planning and Public Consultation***

A Planning Team is to be comprised of representatives from affected First Nations, the principal Renewable Resource Council, a municipal representative, and the Yukon government, as well as other representatives, in order to ensure a balance of perspectives and views and the inclusion of local, regional and Yukon-wide interests in the planning process.

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The terms of reference for the Planning Team will establish the expected outcomes (i.e., recommendations for Goal I boundaries and for any areas remaining within the area of interest, future management principles, etc.); the parameters within which the Planning Team will be expected to operate (i.e., existing government policies, timeframes, budgets, etc.); and pubic involvement guidelines.

A Planning Team is responsible for:

- Carrying out public consultation in order to reach a recommendation on a Goal I boundary;
- Confirming the 'minimum core area' recommended by the Technical Working Group, as the minimum area required to adequately represent a particular ecoregion;
- Recommending a Goal I area from within the area of interest approved by Cabinet in Step 3;
- Recommending management principles for the Goal I area; and
- Forwarding their recommendations to the responsible Ministers (i.e. Minister of Environment and the Minister of Energy, Mines & Resources)

STEP 5: ***Cabinet Review and Approval of Goal I Recommendation and Management Principles***

- Cabinet is asked to make a decision on the Goal I boundaries recommended by the Planning Team and to establish the next steps.
- Cabinet has several options with respect to possible next steps:
  - Seek interim withdrawal for the approved Goal I area, with no further immediate actions;
  - Establish the Goal I area as a park pursuant to the *Parks & Lands Certainty Act*, recognizing the need to prepare a management plan for the park within 5 years;
  - Determine if the park will be developed, when and to what extent.

NEXT STEPS:

Cabinet has determined that all remaining Areas of Interest will be identified for the Yukon Protected Areas Strategy by April 30, 2003. At that time this stage of the process will be completed and no further areas of interest will be identified in connection with YPAS.

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It is recognized that other steps may be required when instituting management planning and/or park development. Cabinet retains the right to determine when these activities may occur, as well as when to invoke the provisions of the *Parks & Lands Certainty Act.*

The Yukon Government is of the view that it is important to complete at least one fully designated protected area using the new YPAS process, as identified above, in the near term. This allows for a clear demonstration of the workability of the YPAS process and responds to recommendations of the Public Advisory Committee that reviewed elements of the YPAS process in early 2001. Accordingly, Cabinet will establish a Planning Team and Terms of Reference for the Eagle Plains Area of Interest during spring, 2002, so that work on identifying and recommending a representative Goal I protected area in this ecoregion can proceed.

GOAL II:

The Goal II component of the Yukon Protected Area Strategy is designed to protect special places, including important wildlife and habitat, uncommon landforms or features, areas of special cultural value, outdoor recreation sites, and wilderness areas with intact ecosystems. This component is seen to be part of the existing overall goals and objectives of the Department of Renewable Resources, which is to become the Department of Environment on April 01, 2002. As such, the Parks & Protected Areas Branch will continue to provide an overall umbrella coordinating function in this area, as part of its ongoing responsibilities for the territorial parks system and implementation of the *Parks & Land Certainty Act.*